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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: AMBASSADOR ADDRESSES SUCCESSFUL NATO  
EVENT

¶1. Summary. Ambassador Derse was a featured speaker at a one-day conference organized by the Romanian Embassy entitled "NATO at 60 Years, an Alliance at Full Political Maturity," which the Romanians organized in their new capacity as NATO contact point embassy in Baku. The well-attended conference also featured remarks by Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, NATO Assistant SYG for Public Diplomacy Jean-Francois Bureau, the Ambassadors of Poland and Romania, the Deputy Minister of Emergency Situations and the NATO Liaison Officer for the South Caucasus Zbigniew Rybacki. End Summary.

¶2. Originally the conference was to feature speeches by Romanian Foreign Minister Cristian Diaconescu and his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov. Diaconescu canceled his trip, due to the Moldovan situation; and Mammadyarov was needed for the visit the same day of Ukrainian President Yushchenko, and so their speeches were delivered by Romanian Ambassador Ureche and Deputy Minister Azimov.

¶3. Headlining the conference, Ureche delivered his Minister's remarks, which highlighted Romania's dedication to the Euro-Atlantic partnership and to expanding that partnership to the "wider Black Sea region," including Azerbaijan. He cited specific examples of bilateral cooperation between the two countries, including an Alliance-sponsored scientific collaboration between Romanian and Azerbaijani institutes on biosafety and food security. He also underlined Romania's interest in having NATO take a more active role on energy security, and linked this to his country's support of White Stream. The Romanian MFA Director for Security Issues, Daniel Ionita, would follow later with more detailed remarks on the concept of the wider Black Sea area.

¶4. Deputy Minister Azimov told the conference that membership for Azerbaijan is not a realistic option for the moment, but partnership is a level all its own; with formal, institutionalized relations between the Alliance and its partners. Partnership involves "political unity, legal harmony and practical interoperability." Azimov said Azerbaijan is considering increased non-military (technical assistance and training) to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. He urged the Alliance not to let PfP become "stationary," pointing out that the situation today is very different from 15 years ago when Azerbaijan associated itself to PfP. In this vein he asked rhetorically how fair it is that Article 5 offers unconditional guarantees of security to NATO members who have pulled out of Afghanistan but makes no offer of protection to partner states that are actively involved.

5. Ambassador Derse gave a well-received and widely covered address that emphasized the commonality of democratic values among NATO members and partner, and the catalytic effect that association with NATO has in partner countries in terms of encouraging military modernization, reform, and

accountability of the armed forces to civilian political leaders. Ambassador also praised Azerbaijan's strategic decision to orient itself toward Euro-Atlantic structures and the professionalism of Azerbaijan's contributions to NATO missions.

¶6. Comment. The Romanian Embassy has gotten off to an impressive start as NATO contact point embassy, bringing energy and visibility to the role that had been lacking for some time. In spite of Minister Diaconescu's absence, the event was well-attended by the diplomatic corps, officials from MFA, MOD and the Presidential Apparat, and a wide range of political commentators across the spectrum of opinion including Vafa Guluzade (who spoke at the event), Rasim Musabayov, Leila Aliyeva and Ilgar Mammadov. End Comment.  
DERSE